

Message Text

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ACTION L-03

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 ISO-00 AID-20 PM-07 NSC-07 SP-03 SS-20

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R 170858Z JUL 74

FM AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0089

INFO AMCONSUL ASMARA

SECDEF WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ADDIS ABABA 8287

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, MASS, EAID, ET

SUBJECT: FAA SECTION 32 - POLITICAL PRISONERS

SECDEF FOR ISA

REF: STATE 68545 AND ADDIS 4257; STATE 150955

1. DEPT WILL APPRECIATE THAT ACTION OF NATURE INDICATED IN LAST STATE REFTEL WOULD RAISE SPECIAL PROBLEMS IN ETHIOPIA IN VIEW OF CURRENT POLITICAL TURMOIL, EXISTENCE FOR PRACTICAL PURPOSES OF TWO GOVERNMENTS (ADDIS 8103), AND FACT THAT AMNESTY OF POLITICAL PRISONERS HAS JUST BEEN ANNOUNCED BY IEG AS RESULT OF DEMAND TO THAT EFFECT BY ARMED FORCES COORDINATING COMMITTEE (AFCC). EMBASSY BELIEVES SUCH ACTION WOULD BE INADVISABLE AT THIS TIME.

2. IF EMBASSY WERE TO INFORM IEG AT THIS TIME OF TEXT SECTION 32, IT WOULD CERTAINLY WISH TO STRESS THAT THIS BEING DONE AS PART OF NOTIFICATIONS TO AID RECIPIENTS THROUGHOUT WORLD. WE BELIEVE THAT PRIMIN AND FOREIGN MINISTRY WOULD CORRECTLY UNDERSTAND THIS ACTION. HOWEVER, IT SEEMS PROBABLE IN HEATED POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE HERE THAT DISTORTED VERBAL REPORTS OF THIS DEMARCHE WOULD SPREAD. WE CAN EASILY IMAGINE WIDESPREAD REPORTS THAT USG HAD THREATENED TO CUT OFF ALL MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE UNLESS IEG PROMPTLY RELEASED THE HIGH-RANKING OFFICIALS WHO HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN RE-CONFIDENTIAL

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CENT MONTHS. SUCH REPORTS WOULD VITIATE TO CONSIDERABLE EXTENT

STRENUOUS EFFORTS WE HAVE BEEN MAKING TO AVOID ANY ACTION OR STATEMENT WHICH COULD EASILY BE MISREAD AS US INTERVENTION IN THE POLITICAL MAELSTROM HERE. IT IS GRATIFYING THAT RUMORS OF US DIRECTION OR INTERVENTION HAVE RECEDED TO A LOW EBB, AND WE WOULD LIKE TO KEEP IT THAT WAY.

3. A FURTHER COMPLICATION, ALTHOUGH OF LESS IMPORTANCE, IS THAT USG IS CURRENTLY URGING IEG TO TAKE APPROPRIATE MEASURES LEADING TO SPEEDY RELEASE OF TENNECO HOSTAGES. THOSE WHO ARE AWARE OF THIS WOULD BE LIABLE JUMP TO CONCLUSION THAT USG IS THREATENING CUT OFF MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE UNLESS IEG CAPITULATES TO DEMANDS OF ELF CAPTORS.

4. ADDITIONALLY, A DEMARCHE OF THIS NATURE WOULD APPEAR RATHER CONSPICUOUSLY GRATUITOUS AT PRESENT IN VIEW OF HIGHLY PUBLICIZED DEMAND BY AFCC THAT POLITICAL PRISONERS BE AMNESTIED, AND GOVERNMENT'S PUBLICIZED ACCEPTANCE OF THIS DEMAND.

5. FOR FOREGOING REASONS, EMBASSY CONSIDERS THAT A DEMARCHE OF TYPE PROPOSED BY DEPT IS LIKELY DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD AT THIS TIME. WE WILL THEREFORE REFRAIN FROM SUCH DEMARCHE UNLESS INSTRUCTED TO CONTRARY. OUR CONCLUSIONS ARE DEBATABLE, HOWEVER, AND WE WISH RECORD A DIFFERING OPINION WITHIN EMBASSY WHICH ARGUES THAT THERE ARE ADVANTAGES AND LITTLE RISK IN PROVIDING IEG WITH TEXT OF SECTION 32 AT THIS TIME. THOSE HOLDING THIS VIEW ARGUE THAT IEG SHOULD BE MADE AWARE SENSE OF CONGRESS ON POLITICAL PRISONER AND HUMAN RIGHTS PROBLEMS. SINCE ALL AID RECIPIENTS BEING INFORMED AT THIS TIME, THERE LESS LIKELIHOOD OF CREATING SUSPICION THAN IF NOTIFICATION DEFERRED UNTIL LATER. ACCORDING THIS OPINION, MATTER WOULD PROBABLY BE RECEIVED IN SIMILAR MANNER TO EMBASSY'S RECENT NOTIFICATION TO IEG OF PROHIBITION OF USG ASSISTANCE TO SECURITY FORCES ENGAGED IN POLICE FUNCTIONS. BOTH IEG AND AFCC HAVE STATED THEIR INTENTION RELEASE POLITICAL PRISONERS AND PROVIDE FAIR TRIAL FOR FORMER OFFICIALS CURRENTLY DETAINED. STATEMENT OF USG INTEREST IN PROTECTION HUMAN RIGHTS COULD POSSIBLY LEND WEIGHT TO THOSE ETHIOPIANS ATTEMPTING IMPLEMENT ABOVE INTENTIONS.

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